

Minutes of LCER AGM 26 February 2022, 10.30am – 12.30pm

Meeting held online, via Zoom

- 1) Sandy Martin, from the chair, opened the meeting at 10.30am. He informed members of a change to the advertised agenda, namely that both invited speakers would have to leave the meeting early due to unforeseen political developments. Each would talk for 5-10 minutes, followed by questions to both; the first section of the meeting would therefore end a little earlier than advertised.
- 2) Apologies were recorded: Trish Williams, Gareth Lowe, Richard Burden, Mike Roberts, James Groves, Benjamin Eckford, Duncan Enright, Charlotte Cornell, Damien Welfare, Mary Southcott, Thomas Gilbert, Sam Kind, Stuart Hill.
- 3) The Chair asked the meeting for permission to record the proceedings; there were no objections. He then handed over the chair to Maria Iacovou for the remainder of the first half of the meeting.
- 4) Maria Iacovou requested that attendees wishing to contribute to the discussion use their virtual "yellow hands" rather than raising their actual hands, which would likely not be noticed. She welcomed Ben Bradshaw MP to the meeting. He gave a short speech in which he touched on a non-aggression pact between left-of-centre parties; on the relationship between the electoral system and the Union; and his optimism that a commitment to PR by the Labour Party was potentially achievable this year.
- 5) Maria Iacovou thanked Ben Bradshaw, and welcomed John McDonnell. John McDonnell began by mentioning the unfolding situation in Ukraine; he then went on to note that support for PR had become the majority position across the Labour membership as well as the broader left of centre, and that Boris Johnson is arguably the best asset of the campaign for electoral reform.
- 6) Questions for the speakers were then taken. They covered a range of topics; particular interest was shown in the state of campaigns with the trade unions, and in the desirability or otherwise of a progressive alliance. Sandy Martin stressed that LCER's position on the question of a progressive alliance was one of neutrality.
- 7) The speakers were thanked. After some additional contributions from the floor, Maria Iacovou closed the first section of the meeting and announced that the second section would commence at 11.30.
- 8) Sandy Martin resumed the Chair, and the business section of the meeting commenced shortly after 11.30am.
- 9) The minutes of the previous meeting (26 November 2020) were agreed as a true record of that meeting.
- 10) The Chair gave a brief summary of his written report, thanking the Executive for their efforts over the past year, and noting the 2021 Conference vote on PR, and the move of Labour for a New Democracy to LCER, as significant developments in the campaign.
- 11) Ken Ritchie (Treasurer) presented the accounts and budget documents, which had also been made available as written papers. He passed on the Auditor's apologies for absence from the meeting, and drew members' attention to the Auditor's written approval of the accounts and budget. In response to a question from the floor, he clarified that salaries for the staff employed for the Labour for a New Democracy project would be raised from external sources, and would not be paid from LCER reserves.
- 12) John Doolan (Parliamentary and Political Officer) talked briefly about the events of the past year, and his work with parliamentarians. He noted that around one third of members of the PLP are in favour of PR, one quarter are against, and the remainder are undecided or have not declared a

view. A question from the floor suggested that the figure of one-third of MPs supporting PR was depressingly low, and asked whether opinion varied according to the size of an MP's majority. JD replied that the size of majority is not a major determinant of an MP's attitude to PR, and that a more important determinant was longevity, with older and longer-standing MPs less likely to support PR.

- 13) Maria Iacovou (Membership Secretary) presented the membership report for the year. The Constitution requires that the AGM approve the level of subscription rates. She proposed that individual subscriptions remain unchanged, and a flat affiliation fee of £10 be applied for both first-time affiliations and renewals. This was agreed by the meeting. In reply to a question about the numbers of CLPs affiliating, she said this number was currently low, at under 20; given that half of all CLPs were in support of PR, there was room for improvement. Several members noted that their own CLPs do not affiliate to any campaign. Another question related to coverage of CLPs: MI reported that this is highly uneven, and there are many CLPs where we have no members at all; the Executive should consider the relationship with CLPs.
- 14) The Chair invited representatives from the Labour for a New Democracy and Politics for the Many campaigns to report on their work. Joe Sousek began by reporting on Labour for a New Democracy and the campaign in the run-up to Conference 2021. Caroline Osborne reported on campaigns within the Trade Unions with Politics for the Many: the policy change by Unite in the aftermath of Conference was extremely encouraging, and there are encouraging signs from the CWU, thanks largely to the work of Billy Hayes. Laura Parker reported on parliamentary work, noting that when the PLP is small, as it is now, many MPs occupy frontbench positions and are limited in what they may say about matters outside their portfolio. She also underlined the importance of working with MPs close to the Leader.
- 15) The Chair read out the results of the recent election of the Executive Committee. The successful candidates were: Lynne Armstrong, William Bain, Charlotte Cornell, John Doolan, Duncan Enright, Billy Hayes, Stuart Hill, Maria Iacovou, Abbie Jones, Robin Layfield, Sandy Martin, Ken Ritchie, Mary Southcott, Julie Ward. The Chair thanked departing members of the Executive, and extended a warm welcome to the three new members. He then thanked Terry Ashton for his role as independent scrutineer and returning officer, and asked him to say a few words about the conduct of the election.
- 16) The proposed amendment to the Financial Standing Orders was passed without discussion.
- 17) The proposed amendment to the Constitution relating to paid staff was passed without discussion.
- 18) The proposed amendment to the Constitution relating to the timing of the AGM was passed without discussion.
- 19) In response to a question from the floor, the Chair asked the meeting to confirm that members were happy to approve (a) the accounts and budget, (b) the appointment of the Auditor for the coming year, and (c) the Executive report as presented to the meeting. These were all approved by a show of hands.
- 20) The Chair repeated his thanks to the outgoing Executive, and thanked all members who had helped the campaign over the past year, including those who had worked for the Labour for a New Democracy campaign. He thanked individually Terry Ashton for his work as scrutineer and returning officer; Damien Welfare for his work as Auditor; and Tony Price for his work on films.
- 21) No matters were raised for consideration under any other business.
- 22) The meeting closed at 12.35pm.